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ABSTRACT

The entrenched nature of affirmative action, immigration, and bilingual education programs shows that ethnic minorities as well as powerful economic interests can benefit from client politics (H. D. Graham, 2002). In recent years, ballot initiatives have pierced the cocoon of legislative support for these policies and overturned them in California and several other states, leading scholars to debate whether direct democracy is a threat to minority rights. This paper is a study of four recent initiatives seeking to eliminate well-protected bilingual education programs. The paper notes that California businessman Ron Unz spearheaded this movement, succeeding in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, and failing in Colorado. It sets out to outline the genesis, conduct, and outcome of the recent initiative campaigns to drastically reform bilingual education. It considers the pattern of elite support and opposition; the campaign themes; and the pattern of mass support and opposition, based on evidence from both aggregate-level and survey data. The paper argues that although bilingual education is a matter of limited salience to the majority of (white) voters, the widely held, if latent, belief that speaking English is an important attribute of U.S. national identity and, as such, important for assimilating immigrants, provided the supporters of the Unz initiatives with an important initial electoral advantage. (Contains 44 references, 13 notes, and 7 tables.) (BT)

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DIRECT DEMOCRACY TAKES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION: FRAMING THE DEBATE IN FOUR STATE INITIATIVES

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Introduction

The progressive and populist reformers who bequeathed the initiative, referendum and recall viewed these as instruments to enable enlightened popular majorities to wrest control of public policy from the parties and politicians who had become beholden to special interests. Seen in this way, the initiative process is a potential counter to the pervasiveness of "client politics" in the United States, a pattern of policy-making in which programs with intense, organized constituencies become virtually immune to legislative change whatever the tides of mass political opinion (Wilson 1992). The entrenched nature of affirmative action, immigration and bilingual education programs shows that ethnic minorities as well as powerful economic interests can benefit from client politics (Graham 2002). In recent years, ballot initiatives have pierced the cocoon of legislative support for these policies and overturned them in California and several other states (Tolbert and Hero 2001; Citrin 1996), leading scholars to debate whether direct democracy is a threat to minority rights (Tolbert and Hero 2001; Hajnal, Gerber, and Louch 2002).

This paper is a study of four recent initiatives seeking to eliminate well-protected bilingual education programs. California businessman Ron Unz spearheaded this movement, succeeding in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, and failing in Colorado. Unz's political entrepreneurship illustrates a growing phenomenon in initiative politics: a political outsider identifies a problem government is unable or unwilling to address and mounts an initiative campaign to impose significant reforms. Proposition 209 in California, the anti-affirmative action initiative first proposed by two academics, followed a similar trajectory. In that initiative campaign, Ward Connerly emerged as the financier and primary spokesperson, and after its passage, Connerly's organization worked to transport the movement to other states. Also in California, the actors Robert Reiner and Arnold Schwarzenegger sponsored initiatives to provide funding for mental health and childcare programs in California.

This paper sets out to outline the genesis, conduct, and outcome of the recent initiative campaigns to drastically reform bilingual education. Specifically, we consider:

1. The pattern of elite support and opposition, including the pattern of campaign expenditures;

2. The campaign themes, with particular attention to the balance of pragmatic and symbolic appeals and the unique failure of the Colorado initiative;

3. The pattern of mass support and opposition, based on evidence from both aggregate-level and survey data. Building on previous research (Huddy and Sears 1995; Pearson and Citrin 2002), we confirm that a mixture of ethnic group interests and symbolic identifications shape public preferences on language policy.

We shall argue that although bilingual education is a matter of limited salience to the majority of (white) voters, the widely held, if latent, belief that speaking English is an important attribute of

American national identity and, as such, important for assimilating immigrants provided the supporters of the Unz initiatives with an important initial electoral advantage. Massive spending by the "no" side in Colorado allowed them to successfully frame their arguments in pragmatic terms, emphasizing the financial cost of reform, and to avoid challenging the hegemonic status of English in the United States.

Contemporary Language Politics in the U.S.

A massive influx of Hispanic and Asian immigrants after the 1965 immigration reforms combined with the rise of identity politics in the wake of the civil rights movement fueled demands for bilingual education and bilingual ballots. These policies, sometimes defended on the basis of group rights, evoked a backlash as politicians, anti-immigrant interest groups, and researchers challenged whether the new immigrants would resemble their largely European predecessors in quickly learning the language of their adopted country (Tatalovich 1995). This backlash took the form of a movement to designate English as the "official" language of the United States. In the 1980s, this question was addressed both by state legislatures and by popular vote in several states. When put on the ballot, "Official English" proponents always prevailed (Citrin et *al.* 1990).

Despite its remarkable ethnic diversity forged by streams of immigrants, the United States always has been linguistically homogeneous. Indeed, to most Americans, speaking English is a hallmark of national identity, a defining attribute of the prototypical member of the polity. For example, 71.3% of respondents in the 1996 General Social Survey said that speaking English was very important in making someone "truly American." It is thus not surprising that demands for language rights would raise concerns about cultural cohesion and national unity (Huntington 2001).

Bilingual education emerged as a national policy following passage of the 1968 National Bilingual Education Act. Tacked on as an amendment to a broader bill aimed at helping Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, it began as a relatively small program designed to facilitate both English language proficiency among non-native English speakers and the acquisition of foreign languages among native English speakers.[1] However, while bilingual education was created explicitly as a pragmatic approach to speed English language learning, it was soon apparent to linguistic minority interest groups that the programs could serve a broader political purpose.

Bilingual education's primary constituency was Spanish speakers and, as a result, leaders in the Hispanic community soon became its most fervent defenders, embracing the programs both as the most

[1] In bilingual education programs, students are taught all school subjects in their native language, with some structured English language classes. These programs are in contrast to both English immersion programs (in which LEP students learn English first and are taught almost exclusively in English) and English as a Second language programs (in which LEP students take most of their courses in English, but spend some course time in classes focused solely on English acquisition).

effective way of teaching English and as a means of preserving a distinct ethnic heritage through native language use (Navarro 1988). Critics of bilingual education (Chavez 1991) argued that other methods, principally immersion programs and the "English as a Second Language" (ESL) approach were more effective in achieving the linguistic assimilation of LEP students. However, these approaches did not meet the standards of the guidelines (the "Lau Remedies") issued by the Department of Education in 1975 in response to a successful Supreme Court case brought by the parents of Chinese-speaking students in San Francisco, which also formalized the goal of cultural maintenance through native language maintenance.[2]

As a result, bilingual education spread and the idea of cultural maintenance gained legitimacy. The Lau remedies even provided recommendations for the preferred ethnic and cultural background of educators (Graham 2002: 86). Latino groups had succeeded in morphing bilingual education from a small, expressly transitional program into an issue evoking ethnic identity that also gained support from elites representing other, chiefly Asian linguistic minorities (Graham 2002; Thernstrom 1980).

Thus the elite debate over bilingual education has two main dimensions, one pragmatic, and one symbolic. On the pragmatic front, defenders of bilingual education insist that in addition to facilitating language maintenance, bilingual education is the most effective means of English language acquisition (Cazden and Snow 1990, Hakuta et al. 2000). Additionally, they argue that bilingual education is more effective than other methods in teaching English language learners academic subjects other than English (Hakuta et al. 2000).

Opponents dispute these claims, arguing that transitional programs are less effective than English immersion and that students tend to languish in the purportedly transitional state for many years, segregating them from native-speakers with non-Hispanic backgrounds (Imhoff 1990). Moreover, they argue that even if bilingual programs could succeed in theory, in practice teachers often were inadequately trained to teach English language skills as well as academically rigorous non-language classes. Ron Unz sought reform through the initiative process in response to evidence about the failure of bilingual education to integrate immigrant children into mainstream classrooms. .[3]

From the symbolic politics perspective, advocates of bilingual education view it as an emblem of group worth and pride, a mechanism for fostering and sustaining one's *ethnic* identity. According to symbolic politics theory (Sears 1996), a particular issue may engage several enduring political orientations. Language issues potentially engage both national and ethnic identities, raising the possibility of tension among minority groups in particular. Second, how an issue is framed will

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[2] The Lau Remedies were not made formal regulations until 1980.
[3] Ron Unz, personal interview with authors March 18, 2003.

influence which predispositions are cued. To critics, bilingual education threatens the priority of a common culture and national identity in a highly diverse society by challenging the symbolic hegemony of English.

Previous research indicates that the dual themes in the elite debate over bilingual education—pragmatism and symbolism—elicit different responses in public opinion. When bilingual education is framed as a temporary device to speed learning English, it receives public support, but when it is regarded as undercutting the status of English as the country's common language, the majority is strongly opposed (Pearson and Citrin 2002, Sears and Huddy 1990). Yet despite widespread public reservations about its purposes and effectiveness, bilingual education programs—including many with a cultural maintenance component—remained well established throughout the country until the late 1990s, undergoing only minor reforms in the 1980s. The diffuse opposition of parents and conservative intellectuals was insufficient to produce large-scale legislative reforms, in large part because of the strength and organization of interest groups in this policy area. Nor was the issue sufficiently salient in the general public to spawn a grassroots movement for change. Bilingual education remained another program protected by intense and well-organized ethnic and education interest groups, yet vulnerable to assault via popular initiatives.

A Tale of Four Initiatives

Genesis

Ron Unz, a theoretical physicist and founder of a successful software company in the Silicon Valley, had run in the 1994 California Republican gubernatorial primary, opposing the incumbent Pete Wilson and denouncing Proposition 187, the initiative that denied illegal immigrants access to most public services, including the schools. Several years later, he founded "English for the Children," the official sponsor of the ballot initiatives to reform bilingual education programs in California, Arizona, Massachusetts and Colorado. In all four campaigns, Unz drafted the ballot measure, provided most of the money for the signature collection and campaign, and acted as its principal spokesperson.

Unz describes himself as a proponent of immigration and the classical model of assimilation (Unz, personal interview 2003). He became interested in the shortcomings of bilingual education after learning of a series of boycotts by a group of Hispanic parents against bilingual education programs in Los Angeles in 1996. These parents were objecting to district policies that placed their children in bilingual education classes without their consent, pointing to the difficulties they subsequently faced in removing their children from these purportedly transitional programs. Alerted by coverage of the boycotts in the *Los Angeles Times*, Unz examined the state's data regarding the performance of existing bilingual education programs and concluded they were "a disastrous failure," segregating LEP students

for many years without adequately teaching them English and encouraging high dropout rates. He decided that a ballot initiative was the only way to eliminate an established policy unpopular with the general public and, he asserts, also opposed privately by many Hispanic activists (Unz, personal interview March 18, 2003).

Content

California's Proposition 227 was placed on the ballot in the June 1998 primary election. After the measure passed, it served as the prototype for Arizona's Amendment 203 in 2000 and Colorado's Amendment 31 and Massachusetts' Question 2 in 2002. The prologue to each of these initiatives began by stating that English is the national language of the United States and the state, that immigrant children desire to have their children learn English to pursue the "American Dream," and that the state has a moral obligation and constitutional obligation to provide the vital skill of literacy in English to all children. The initiatives then asserted that the public schools were failing to serve immigrant children who could easily acquire full fluency in a new language if exposed to it at an early age.[4]

The core of Unz's proposal required that all children in public schools shall "be taught English by being taught in English." All "English learners," clearly defined in the initiative text, shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed *one* (emphasis added) year. The initiative encouraged combining English learners from different native-language groups and rapidly transferring these students to mainstream classes. So Unz emphasized assimilation and integration, with a common language the main ingredient of the cultural cement for a diverse nation.

Unz also worried about how a bureaucracy committed to the status quo would enforce the new law. The initiative provided waivers for children with "special, physical, emotional, and psychological needs." Subject to parental consent and under guidelines to be prepared by state and local Boards of Education, such children could be placed in alternatives to English immersion. Convinced of widespread abuse of the waiver process in California, Unz toughened the penalties for these violations in the later initiatives. From the outset, the initiative expressly stated that a parent or guardian could sue to enforce the proposed law and to receive attorney's fees, costs, and compensatory money damages. However, in the later versions, the penalties for noncompliance were expanded. By 2002, the Colorado and Massachusetts versions stipulated that *any* school employee, school committee member or other elected official or administrator who willfully and repeatedly refused to implement the proposal could be

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[4]Full text of the initiatives can be found at http://primary98.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/Propositions/227.htm, http://www.sosaz.com/election/2000/Info/pubpamphlet/english/prop203.htm#pgfId-1, http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/main.htm, http://www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/elebq02/bq022.htm

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personally ordered to pay fees, costs, and damages, and could not be reimbursed for that payment. This included teachers, who had not been covered in the earlier versions. Furthermore, the Massachusetts and Colorado initiatives also permitted parents to sue administrators and teachers for waivers granted in error at any time within ten years. And the Arizona, Colorado and Massachusetts initiatives also required standardized testing in English for all subjects from the second grade on, presumably in order to monitor compliance and progress.

Context

California was the obvious place to launch the anti-bilingual education drive. The events in Los Angeles had sparked Unz's interest, and California is the main destination for immigrants from Latin America and Asia, the clients of most bilingual education programs. As illustrated in Table 1, in 2000, 32.4 percent of California's population was Hispanic in origin, and another 10.9 percent classified themselves as Asian. Furthermore, 39.5 percent of the population above five years of age came from a household where a language other than English, (mainly Spanish) was spoken at home. Hispanics comprised 44.2 percent of the K-12 population in California public schools, and 25.4 percent of California's K-12 students were designated as LEP. In Los Angeles County schools, 60 percent of the K-12 students were Hispanic and 33 percent were LEP children.[5] And while bilingual programs in Los Angeles are taught in a variety of languages, 90 percent of the LEP students are Spanish-speakers.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Unz's reasons for choosing Arizona, Colorado and Massachusetts as subsequent targets of English for the Children are more varied. A necessary condition is that all three states allow for initiatives and referenda. Both Arizona and Colorado have large Hispanic populations and growing numbers of LEP students. Both states passed Official English initiatives in 1986. In Colorado there had been earlier attempts (in 1998 and 2000) to qualify similar anti-bilingual education initiatives for the ballot and, as a result, there was a core of organizational support. Massachusetts, however, was a less obvious candidate for a bilingual education initiative. In Massachusetts, the combined Hispanic and Asian share of the population is only 10.6 percent and only 4.5 percent of the K-12 children were in LEP programs. Unz explained that he was intrigued by the prospect of reforming bilingual education in the "most liberal state in the country;" if "we could win in Massachusetts," he stated, we could win everywhere" (personal communication 2003).

Campaign Arguments

In every state, the English for the Children campaign sought to frame their proposed initiative in pragmatic terms. Presenting English language acquisition as the first step on the path to an improved education, Unz used official statistics to portray existing bilingual education programs as a failure. He

argued that many students languished in bilingual education programs and LEP students were essentially segregated from their native-born or assimilated peers. Immersion programs were argued to be superior because they would speed English language competence, thereby removing a handicap facing immigrant children and providing equal opportunity.

In California, Proposition 227 qualified for the ballot several years after the passage of Proposition 187 and Proposition 209, the measures banning many benefits to immigrants and affirmative action in state programs, respectively. Its supporters strove to distance themselves from the anti-minority, anti immigrant labels critics had attached to these previous initiatives. Similarly, Unz tried to enlist the support of local Hispanic leaders and parents; indeed, the chairperson and other visible members of every English for the Children organization were Hispanic. In California, for example, Jaime Escalante, a well-known Hispanic educator portrayed in the film "Stand and Deliver," was the honorary chairman of the campaign and a Santa Ana Hispanic activist, Gloria Matta Tuchman, served as the campaign's co-chair. The campaign tried to convince Hispanics and other minority groups that the proposed reforms would improve the life chances of immigrant children by speeding their acquisition of English.

The opposition's arguments were more diffuse. Defenders of bilingual education generally avoided attacking the idea that English was the nation's common language; indeed in Colorado the opposition campaign organization labeled itself "English Plus," and in Arizona one opposition group was "English Plus More." When the opposition claimed that the Unz initiative was implicitly racist, they argued not just that a one year transition period would make it harder for immigrants to maintain their native language, but also that it would make it more difficult, not less, to progress in all phases of their education. In California, the anti-227 coalition, led by Hispanic advocacy groups and organizations of teachers and school administrators,[6] contested Unz's assertion that bilingual education was a failure. After 227 passed, the opposition campaigns in Arizona, Massachusetts, and Colorado called on voters to reject a "failed" California experiment, claiming, unlike Unz, that data showed that LEP students were now doing worse.[7]

Opponents of the anti-bilingual education proposal argued that by focusing exclusively on teaching English, the immersion classes mandated by Unz would leave students a year behind in other academic subjects. This would harm and frustrate the students, causing some of the older ones to drop out of school while increasing the cost of educating those who remained for an extra year. The initiatives provided a simplistic and inflexible approach to teaching English, they argued, ignoring the fact that there

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[5] Data from the California Department of Education, Ed-Data

[6] These included MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund), and the California Teachers Association, Federation of Teachers, PTA, School Boards, and School Administrators.

[7] The opposition ballot statement for Arizona's Proposition 203 argued that "Reports on California's experiment, initially positive, now are quite troubling." (Arizona Department of Elections 2000).

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is more than one proven method for language instruction. Thus, the initiatives unfairly limited parental choice, undermined local control of education by imposing a statewide "one size fits all" policy, and potentially violated federal civil rights laws by depriving children of native language instruction (*San Francisco Chronicle* April 28, 1998).

Differing state demographic compositions, changes in the wording of the initiative, and the ability to use earlier outcomes as a foil led to tactical and rhetorical differences from one campaign to the other. For example, as noted above, later campaigns drew on the example of California's (and to a lesser extent, Arizona's) implementation of the initiative to claim or deny that the new immersion programs were working.

In Arizona, American Indian groups became a new and important source of opposition, responding to the claim that Unz' s proposal threatened instruction in tribal languages (Hollow Horn 2000). However, proponents insisted programs for populations already fluent in English were exempt and that tribal sovereignty would, in any case, override Amendment 203. Indeed, in response to the opposition of Native American leaders, Unz stated, "we were pretty straightforward during the campaign that the initiative did not apply to Indians… Then they go on and fight it and spend hundreds of thousand dollars. If tribes have so much money to fight this, maybe they should pay for their own language programs" (Associated Press 2000).

In Colorado, bilingual education programs aimed at immigrant children were concentrated almost exclusively in the Denver school system, which had recently adopted a plan for LEP students and was under federal supervision specifically aimed at decreasing the length of time students spent in bilingual education classes. This prompted the opposition campaign to argue that Amendment 31 was a statewide solution that might not reach its target (Hubler 2002). The opposition in Colorado also argued that reform had cost Arizona a huge amount of money and that new taxes might be required if Amendment 31 passed.

Finally, in both Massachusetts and Colorado, the right to sue teachers became a central issue. The opposition statement in the Massachusetts ballot pamphlet argued: "teachers should focus on teaching kids English, not worrying about being sued for helping a child learn." The successful Republican candidate for Governor in Massachusetts, Mitt Romney, supported the initiative but expressed reservations about this provision. In Colorado, the conservative Republican governor, Bill Owens, cited the danger of lawsuits for granting waivers as the main reason for his opposition.

Elite Attitudes

In every state, the political establishment, education organizations, Hispanic interests groups, and leading newspapers overwhelmingly opposed the ballot initiative. Elite opposition to the initiatives was widespread, as illustrated in Table 2. No prominent Democrat in any state expressed support, and the

Clinton administration also inveighed against it, attacking it as rigid, impractical and unfair to immigrant children (Decker 1998). On the Republican side, opposition, while not universal, was predominant. In California, the winner of the concomitant Republican primary, Dan Lungren, came out against Proposition 227, as did all of the other major gubernatorial candidates. But when the incumbent Republican Pete Wilson endorsed it, English for the Children was quick to repudiate the support of someone who was viewed with hostility by most Latino activists.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

In Arizona, Massachusetts, and Colorado, Republican governors opposed the Unz proposal, although several members of Congress expressed their support. Senator John McCain also opposed Amendment 203 in Arizona, along with George W. Bush, Al Gore, and the official leadership of the Navajo Tribal Nation.[8] The main exception to this pattern of Republican opposition was in Massachusetts where the winner of the concurrent gubernatorial race, Republican Mitt Romney, not only came out in support of Question 2, but also made the initiative a theme of his campaign.[9]

Elite opposition to reforming bilingual education through the initiative process took several forms. In both Arizona and Colorado, the initiatives faced legal challenges in getting on the ballot, delaying the process. In California, the legislature used the familiar tactic of assuaging public opinion by proposing lesser reforms (Yee 1998). In an admission that there were problems with the status quo, less than three months before the election the State Board of Education granted additional local autonomy to schools to develop their own programs. State legislators then passed a bill that imposed a reduction in the number of years of allowable for native language instruction. However, Governor Pete Wilson vetoed the legislation. In Massachusetts, the state legislature also tried to prevent passage of the initiative by enacting less stringent bilingual education reform just months before the 2002 election.

Media elites echoed most politicians. As Table 2 shows, in every state the major newspapers editorialized against the initiative. In the California case, an op-ed in the *New Republic* by the respected Peter Schrag was typical. Although agreeing with Unz that bilingual education was "a failed system," Schrag argued that the proposed remedy "is almost as rigid as the Kafkaesque system it would replace" and that the nuances of bilingual education were too difficult to address through a popular vote (Schrag 1998). In three states, however, such warnings about the defects of populist policy-making proved unpersuasive.

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[8] Arizona Department of Elections 2000, Ballot Arguments.

[9] Romney's opposition to the clause that allowed parents to sue teachers and pledge that he would work with the legislature to remove that clause (Richardson 2002), also served to undercut one of the central arguments of the opposition campaign.

Money and Advertising

In California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, campaign spending for and against the Unz initiative was both limited and relatively balanced, with initiative supporters spending substantial resources to qualify the measure for the ballot. Televised advertising by both sides also was quite restricted, and in this context the proponent's clear message about the importance of learning the nation's common language easily carried the day (Vaishnav 2002; Yettick 2002).

The campaign in Colorado, however, clearly demonstrates the potential of campaign resources. There, the opposition campaign had an overwhelming funding advantage. Official figures show that the opposition spent $3.3 million, compared to only $535,000 by the proponents of Amendment 31. After one deducts the estimated $350,000 required to qualify the measure for the ballot, these figures indicate an advantage of about 18:1 for the opposition. The "No" campaign had one main backer. Patricia Stryker, an heiress to the Lilly pharmaceutical fortune, gave English Plus 3 million dollars, almost all of which was used for a five-week blitz of television advertising. Given the differences in the population of the two states, Unz maintains it would take 30 million dollars to match the potential impact of Stryker's donation in California (personal communication 2003).[10]

The anti-Amendment 31 campaign "ignored the initiative's main goal of virtually eliminating bilingual education…instead it attacked the initiative as too costly, too punitive, and too restrictive" (Yettick 2002). The 'No" campaign made no references to ethnic pride or multiculturalism; instead, it warned about the financial and administrative costs of the initiative, giving a pragmatic cast to well-established conservative values. Accordingly, some ads sponsored by English Plus portrayed Amendment 31 as an unfunded mandate that would increase the state's tax burden (Hubler 2002c). Others contended that lawsuits against teachers would result from the initiative's passage and that parents would lose control of their children's education (Howe and Cada 2002).

Finally, the text of one dramatic ad shown two weeks before the election claimed that Amendment 31 would "knowingly force children who can barely speak English into regular classrooms, creating chaos and disrupting learning." Another ad showed children looking apprehensively at their classmates. The implication was that separating LEP children in bilingual classrooms actually *benefited* the largely white mainstream. When the Rocky Mountain News, which opposed the Unz initiative, editorialized that this ad represented a covert appeal to ethnic prejudice and was intended to frighten people, its sponsors admitted to a mistake and stopped broadcasting it (Hubler 2002c).

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[10]English Plus spent more than any previous initiative campaign in Colorado history save one (Hubler 2002b). By way of contrast, the incumbent Colorado Senatorial candidate Wayne Allard spent just under $5.3 million in his very competitive reelection campaign against Tom Strickland in the same year.

While we cannot measure the effects of particular ads or arguments, the overall result of the media campaign in Colorado is indisputable. Money talked. An early October poll in Colorado of 500 likely voters demonstrated the effects of the advertising campaign. This survey found that well into the campaign, only 5 percent felt the bilingual education initiative was the most important issue in the upcoming election. However, the proportion of respondents saying they intended to support Amendment 31 had declined from 66 percent in July to 48 percent by October.[11] One month later, voters rejected the initiative by a margin of 56 to 44 percent. The opposition campaign apparently had succeeded in framing the issue in pragmatic terms. The cues most accessible to voters related to cost, flexibility and necessity rather than the value of affirming a conception of America as defined and united by the linguistic assimilation of immigrants. With symbolic predispositions disengaged, the balance of judgments regarding the more concrete advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education, matters about which the average voter probably knows little, seemingly was swayed by the one-sided flow of communications.

An Overview of Campaign Dynamics

Although there is a regrettable paucity of survey data regarding public opinion in Arizona and Massachusetts, it seems safe to conclude that the absence of intensive campaigning there meant that, unlike the Colorado case, the aggregate level of support for the bilingual education was quite stable. Polling in California was much more widespread and the evidence is that Proposition 227 enjoyed a substantial lead in the beginning phases of the campaign. As Table 3 indicates, a March poll conducted by the Field Institute indicated that 79 percent of likely voters said they supported the initiative. Perhaps in response to the opposition campaign and media coverage of the issue, approval slipped to 66 percent in May. Nevertheless, in the June election Proposition 227 passed by margin of 60 to 40 percent.

Early on, opinion about the initiative was high among all political and demographic subgroups. The March Field poll summarized in Table 3 reveal that an overwhelming percentage of Republicans supported the measure (92 percent) as well as a significant majority of Democrats (69 percent). At that time, the majority of likely voters in all ethnic groups, including Hispanics (66 percent) and Asians (87 percent), said they approved of Proposition 227. In fact, while Latino support lagged behind other groups (66 percent compared to 69 percent among African Americans and 82 percent among whites), Asian Americans expressed the highest level of support with 87 percent supporting the initiative.

The decline in support between March and May also was across the board. Nevertheless, as the campaign progressed and liberal and conservative elites became more engaged, bilingual education became an increasingly partisan and ideological issue. While Republicans had always been much more

[11] Denver Post/9News/KOA Statewide and Congressional Election Surveys of likely voters conducted by Ciruli Associates July 8 to 14, 2002 and October 9 to October 12, 2002. Full results available at www.ciruli.com

likely to support the initiative than Democrats, the Field Polls report that between March and May, a 22 percentage point partisan difference grew to a 47.2 percentage point partisan difference.

Exit poll data collected by the *Los Angeles Times* confirm the large partisan difference found in the pre-election surveys. However, the level of support for Proposition 227 at the polls is significantly lower than demonstrated in earlier surveys. The May Field poll indicated that 68 percent of whites supported the initiative and according to the *LA Times* poll results (presented in Table 4), 67 percent of whites voted for Prop 227. In contrast, while 56 percent of Hispanic likely voters expressed support in the May poll, only 37 percent voted for the initiative.[12] In a multivariate analysis of respondents in the *LA Times* Exit Poll reported in Table 5, the effect of ethnicity remains highly significant even after the imposition of the conventional controls for demographic and political background. Hispanics were more likely than any other ethnic group to vote no on Proposition 227 and Asians were also significantly less supportive than whites. Not surprisingly, ideology and partisanship also retain significant effects on how people voted in the multivariate model.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The large gap between opinions expressed by Hispanics in the pre-election polls and their actual voting behavior suggests that the campaign mobilized feelings of ethnic identity, possibly through a late rush of campaign advertising in both the English and Spanish language media. Arguably, a proposal initially viewed as a proposal to help children learn English, a common desire of immigrant parents, came to be viewed as hostile and intolerant in the wake of the attacks mounted by activists.

Without individual level data in the form of exit polls, inferences about ethnic and partisan differences in voting outside of California are difficult to draw.[13] It is clear, however, that in Massachusetts, an initiative winning 68 percent must have received strong support from the state's large Democratic majority. In Colorado, the position of the Republican governor and the opposition campaign's anti-tax appeal also may have moderated partisan and ethnic differences. Indeed, results from a *Denver Post* poll conducted by Ciruli Associates in June 2001 previewing the vote on Amendment 31

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[12] A similar, though less pronounced, pattern is evident for Blacks and Asians, with gaps of 9% and 8%, respectively.

[13] In the absence of individual level data, ecological inference can provide clues as to voter motivations. Given the flaws of this approach, particularly when the units of analysis are large, as, say in the case of California counties, we provide just a few features of the results of multivariate analyses in which the county-level vote on the anti-bilingual education initiative was regressed against indicators of ethnic and political context, including the proportion of Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and registered Democrats, respectively. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is that in Arizona the proportion of Native Americans rather than Hispanics in a country predicted voting against the initiative, an indirect confirmation that the vocal campaign of tribal leaders had resonated. In California and, to a lesser extent in Colorado, opposition was higher in strongly Democratic counties, even after controls for the size of the minority population. And in Massachusetts, neither ethnic nor partisan context had a significantly effect on the county-level vote, again a confirmation of accounts of the campaign that reported diffuse support for the English immersion approach in a low-key campaign. Full results of this analysis are available from the authors upon request.

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showed that 53 percent of Republicans compared to 47 percent of Democrats said they favored reform of bilingual education. The gap between whites and Hispanics was 15 percentage points (52 percent compared to 37 percent), a significant gap, but less than the gap in California.

Language and American Identity

An underlying claim of this paper is that subjective conceptions of American national identity shape public preferences on language policies. Specifically, approval of "English-only" measures such as the Unz initiative represents a kind of default option, at least for the mainly native-born white segment of the population. Unfortunately, because the available media and exit polls do not include measures of national or ethnic identification, this claim cannot be put to a direct test. For a more systematic analysis of the motivations underlying voting behavior on the anti-bilingual education proposal, this paper therefore relies on evidence from the Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS) conducted by the Institute for Social Science Research Center at UCLA.

Los Angeles provides an excellent case study for this analysis. Its population is ethnically and linguistically diverse; it has a large body of LEP students; and bilingual education has long been a salient issue there, with demands for change sparking Unz's interest in the issue. In this context, the overwhelming support for bilingual programs that involved immediate full immersion in English or just a short (1 to 2 year) transitional period of instruction in the native language is striking. In a pooled sample of LACSS respondents from 1994-2000, 85 percent favored these options, which closely resemble the Unz proposal. Only 8 percent (and just 13 percent of Hispanic respondents) opted for bilingual education for the purpose of cultural maintenance.

Pearson and Citrin (2002) analyzed the 1994 and 1995 LACSS data to investigate how national and ethnic identifications influenced these opinions. Using an item asking respondents whether they viewed themselves mainly as "just an American," a member of an ethnic group, or "both," they found that among both whites and Hispanics, those whose preferred self-definition was a national rather than ethnic identity were more likely to oppose bilingual education. Pearson and Citrin also analyzed responses of a national sample to the question "do you favor eliminating bilingual education?" included in the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. The results of a multivariate analysis showed that an assimilationist conception of American identity, as captured by the statement that ethnic and racial groups in America should blend into the mainstream, boosted agreement that bilingual education programs should be eliminated.

Tables 6 and 7 present data from the 2000 and 2002 LACSS, enabling us to explore public opinion after the passage and implementation of Proposition 227. Table 6 shows that the majority of respondents in every ethnic group favor either full English immersion or a very limited period of bilingual

education. Hispanics are more supportive of an extended period of bilingual education than any other ethnic group, with 35 percent of Hispanic respondents in the pooled 2000 and 2002 samples favoring a transitional period longer than two years. Nevertheless, two-thirds of all Hispanics and 57 percent of foreign-born Hispanics opted for the programs resembling the Unz proposal.

[Insert Tables 6 and 7 about here]

Finally, Table 7 reports the results of a multivariate analysis with controls for demographic characteristics and measures of political ideology, patriotism (indexed by questions regarding pride in and love for America and the flag) and ethnic identification (captured by questions about how important is one's ethnicity and how often one thinks of oneself in terms of ethnicity). With these mediating variables included, the effect of Hispanic ethnicity on support for more bilingual education is no longer statistically significant. Among whites, patriotism is a significant predictor of support for English-only instruction. Among Hispanics, a strong sense of ethnic identity and Spanish language use are significantly associated with the support for bilingual education. These findings are additional, albeit indirect, evidence that opinion on language issues is linked to ideas about Americanism and the prioritization of national and ethnic identities.

Discussion

The current phase of language conflict in the United States stems from the interplay of the influx of immigrants, mainly Spanish-speaking and mainly from Mexico, after Congress reformed immigration law in 1965; increased ethnic consciousness; and a broad push for recognition from these new immigrant groups. Hispanic interest groups have been the main spokespeople in support of language rights and increased bilingual services in the post-civil rights era. Bilingual education programs were established outside the glare of public attention through amendments to legislation with broader and more popular purposes and were implemented by means of bureaucratic and judicial decisions. These programs quickly developed a cadre of intense supporters: teachers, administrators, and ethnic activists. Responding to these interest groups, and sensitive to charges of racism and prejudice, legislators consistently backed bilingual education against sporadic waves of criticism.

The recent movement to use the initiative process to overturn bilingual education programs benefited from the pervasive sense that speaking English is an important aspect of belonging to America and that it is only practical for newcomers to learn it and use it in the public realm.

With a limited investment of funds, Ron Unz was able to employ this cultural precept as a foundation for his successful effort to overturn established policies in three states. Unz avoided nativist language and defended immigrants. He framed his attack on bilingual education in pragmatic terms; the programs had to go because they failed to teach English and thus handicapped immigrant children in their quest to enter the mainstream economy. Survey evidence presented here and in previous research shows

that as a diffuse symbol, bilingual education is popular (Sears and Huddy 1987). However, this approval hinges on its role in the process of cultural assimilation. So even if the idea was not invoked in the initiative campaigns, the common belief that speaking English is a badge American national identity boosted support for Proposition 227 and its offspring in three other states. Indeed, when asked why they supported a prohibition of instruction for non-native speakers in a language other than English, three out of four California voters questioned by the *Los Angeles Times* Exit Poll simply said that "if you live in America, you need to speak English."

It seems clear then that opposition is cued when bilingual education is associated with the idea of "cultural rights," a notion that challenges dominant conceptions of Americanism (Citrin et al. 2001). To most voters, including parents of school age children, the costs and benefits of bilingual education are neither large, visible, nor personally salient.

An interesting question, therefore, is whether the image of American national identity itself is stable and strong. If so, then what explains the shift in opinions in the Colorado electorate? The pro-initiative forces tried to discredit existing bilingual education programs for failing to achieve rapid linguistic assimilation. The well-financed campaign to defeat Amendment 31 in Colorado also appealed on pragmatic grounds, arguing that the change in policy was costly, legally shaky, hostile to teachers, and a threat to the teaching of foreign languages in an increasingly global world. There was no defense of cultural maintenance and no attack on the iconic symbols of assimilation; to the extent the "No" campaign in Colorado fused interests and values (Chong 2000), the values invoked were the conservative principles of fiscal responsibility, choice, and local control. For attitudes to influence behavior, they must be engaged by salient cues. In Colorado, there was a heavy flow of communications on the issue of bilingual education, but almost no cueing of national identities.

The successful drive to reform bilingual education in several states indicates that interest group politics is not immune to popular pressures. Direct democracy enabled a policy entrepreneur to overturn the status quo at the polls. Future research will have to explore the implementation of the Unz-inspired reforms. Bilingual programs do not directly affect the majority of Americans who speak only English. The principal groups targeted by such programs are immigrants and their LEP children, who overwhelmingly are Hispanic. Because the salience of the issue is far greater for linguistic minorities, it is unlikely that there will be sustained public pressure on administrators to comply with the new law, and state fiscal crises may limit the resources necessary to ensure that immersion programs are working. So, whether change is substantial and rapid probably will depend on the attention span of the public as much as on the staying power of the traditional conception of American national identity.

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Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the Initiative States

	Arizona	California	Colorado	Massachusetts
White	63.8%	46.7%	74.5%	81.9%
Black	3.1	6.7	3.8	5.4
Hispanic	25.3	32.4	17.1	6.8
Asian	1.8	10.9	2.2	3.8
Native American	5.0	1.0	1.0	0.2
Non-English at home	25.9	39.5	15.1	18.7
LEP students	NA	25.4	11.5	4.5
White K-12	54.0	34.8	65.7	75.9
Black K-12	4.6	8.3	5.7	8.7
Hispanic K-12	32.7	44.2	24.3	10.7
Asian K-12	1.9	8.1	3.0	4.4
Native American K-12	6.8	0.9	1.2	0.3

Cell entries are percentages. Data come from Census 2000 (people Quick Facts). Language other than English spoken at home is for respondents age 5 and above. Educational data come from the states' Departments of Education: CA (2001-2002); CO (Fall 2002); AZ (1999-2000); MA (2000-2001).

Table 2. Dimensions of the Initiative Campaigns, by State

	Elite Positions	Newspaper Endorsements	Campaign Spending (pro/con ratio)	Outcome
California Proposition 227 **June 1998 primary election**	Supported by Governor Pete Wilson (R) Opposed by all major gubernatorial candidates	Opposed by all major California newspapers, including Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and Sacramento Bee	Supporters: about $1.6 million, of which $300,000 was spent on qualification Opposition: about $1.2 million (1.3 to 1)	Passed, 60% to 40%
Arizona Proposition 203 **November 2000 general election**	Supported by two Republican Congressmen Opposed by Governor Jane Hull (R) and Senator John McCain (R)	Opposed by the *Arizona Republic, Arizona Daily Sun,* and other major Arizona papers	Supporters: about $280,000, of which $170,000 was spent on qualification Opposition: about $165,000 (1.75 to 1)	Passed, 63% to 37%
Massachusetts Question 2 **November 2002 general election**	Supported by gubernatorial candidate Mitt Romney (R) Opposed by Governor Jane Swift (R) and gubernatorial candidate Shannon O'Brien (D)	Supported by the *Boston Herald* Opposed by *Boston Globe*	Supporters: about $200,000, more than half of which was spent on qualification Opponents: about $600,000 (.34 to 1)	Passed, 68% to 32%
Colorado Amendment 31 **November 2002 general election**	Supported by some members of the CO congressional delegation Opposed by Governor Bill Owens (R)	Opposed by *The Denver Post* and *The Rocky Mountain News*	Supporters: about $535,000, of which $350,000 was spent on ballot qualification Opposition $3.3 million (.16 to 1)	Failed, 44% to 56%

Table 3. Trends in California Opinion on Proposition 227 (% in Favor)

		March 1998		April 1998		May 1998	
		All	Whites	All	Whites	All	Whites
Total		79.4%	81.6%	76.2%	78.4%	65.6%	67.5%
Ethnicity	White	81.6		78.4		67.5	
	Black	68.8		71.4		57.1	
	Hispanic	66.0		61.4		55.8	
	Asian	86.5		85.0		65.0	
	Other	85.7		66.7		74.1	
Gender	Male	80.9	84.0	79.1	82.6	68.1	70.3
	Female	77.9	79.5	73.3	74.4	63.2	64.8
Age	18-29	73.2	75.3	67.6	67.5	65.9	62.0
	30-39	77.3	80.1	7.1	79.5	64.2	67.7
	40-49	78.8	81.7	77.8	80.6	54.2	53.6
	50-59	84.4	86.4	80.9	79.6	65.0	66.7
	60+	79.3	82.5	79.7	80.1	74.1	77.1
Education	< HS	78.6	81.3	75.0	92.3	56.3	68.4
	HS grad	82.4	86.0	81.3	84.1	74.4	79.6
	Some College	80.4	84.2	78.3	83.0	68.5	72.4
	College Grad	81.0	80.7	76.9	75.8	68.7	66.2
	Post Grad	67.9	69.2	65.9	78.3	46.3	46.4
Party ID	Democrat	69.4	72.0	65.6	66.5	49.4	50.0
	Independent	76.0	75.4	75.8	79.8	64.3	63.7
	Republican	92.0	93.4	87.3	87.9	86.2	86.6
Ideology	Liberal	58.5	55.7	51.1	48.0	37.9	35.9
	Moderate	79.3	83.1	74.8	76.8	66.2	69.1
	Conservative	89.3	92.9	89.8	93.3	87.0	88.2
Income	<$20 K	74.7	80.0	73.7	73.3	63.0	66.7
	$20-40 K	79.9	84.2	72.4	76.9	70.3	74.0
	$40-60K	79.7	79.1	74.1	76.5	60.7	61.3
	$60-80K	79.3	81.7	79.1	82.6	69.9	73.6
	$80K+	81.8	81.7	82.5	82.9	64.2	64.4
Native Born		79.4	81.3	75.9	77.8	66.6	67.7

Source: Field polls, CA. March 5-15, 1998. April 20-28, 1998. May 20-26, 1998. Sample includes registered voters who are likely to vote in the June 1998 primary election.

Table 4. Support for Proposition 227

		% Voted Yes on Prop 227	
		All	Whites
Total		60%	
Ethnicity	White	67	
	Black	48	
	Hispanic	37	
	Asian	57	
	Other	59	
Gender	Male	64	72
	Female	57	63
Age	18-29	50	56
	30-39	61	66
	40-49	58	65
	50-59	61	68
	60+	65	70
Education	< HS	51	68
	HS grad	57	69
	Some College	65	73
	College Grad	63	68
	Post Grad	57	60
Party ID	Democrat	47	52
	Independent	59	70
	Republican	77	78
Ideology	Liberal	36	39
	Moderate	59	65
	Conservative	77	82
Income	<$20	50	60
	$20-40 K	56	65
	$40-60K	61	67
	$60-75K	65	71
	$75-100K	62	66
	$100K+	66	70

Source: Los Angeles Times/CNN California Exit Poll, June 2, 1998

Table 5. Predicting the 227 Yes Vote

	B	SE
Age	.037#	.022
Education	-.061*	.028
Income	.087**	.025
Male	.155*	.073
Hispanic	-.985***	.118
Black	-.373**	.108
Asian	-.417*	.191
Ideology	.754***	.054
Republican Party ID	.269***	.039
Constant	-1.830***	.207
N	3777	
-2 Log Likelihood	4445.908	
% Correctly Predicted	68.2	

*Source: Los Angeles Times/CNN California Exit Poll, June 2, 1998. Cells contain logit coefficients and standard errors. Reference group is whites. All other variables are coded as in Table 4. Ideology is scored in the conservative direction; Party Id is scored in the Republican direction. #p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001*

Table 6. Public Opinion about Types of Bilingual Education Program in Los Angeles, by Ethnicity and Nativity

	Complete Immersion	Native Language up to 1 year	Native Language until English Proficient	Native Language for as Long as Desired
Whites	41.0% (256)	39.7% (248)	14.7% (92)	4.6% (29)
Blacks	40.2% (184)	32.1% (167)	18.7% (97)	9.0% (47)
Asians	50.0% (47)	34.0% (32)	11.7% (11)	4.3% (4)
All Hispanics	28.2% (184)	36.7% (239)	25.9% (169)	9.2% (60)
Hispanics				
Native Born	35.8% (64)	40.8% (73)	18.4% (33)	5.0% (9)
Foreign Born Citizens	26.8% (44)	40.9% (67)	20.1% (33)	12.2% (20)
Foreign Born Non-citizens	24.6% (73)	32.3% (96)	33.0% (98)	10.1% (30)

Data come from the 2002 and 2000 LACSS, pooled. Question wording: "There are several ideas about how to teach children who don't speak English when they enter our public schools. Which statement best describes how you feel? (1) All classes should be conducted only in English so that students have to learn English right from the start; (2) children who don't know English could have classes in their native language for up to a year (3) They should take classes in their native language for as long as it takes to learn English; or (4) Students who want to keep up their native languages and cultures should be able to take many of their classes in their native languages all the way through high school." Percentages are across by ethnic groups.

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Table 7. Determinants of Support for English Immersion After Proposition 227 (LACSS 2000-2002)

	Total Sample	Whites	Hispanics
Hispanic	-.034 (.09)		
Black	-.011 (.08)		
Asian	.307* (.15)		
Other	-.026 (.10)		
Conservatism	.032* (.02)	.055* (.02)	.003 (.03)
Education	.037# (.02)	-.043 (.04)	.010 (.05)
Income	.009 (.01)	-.017 (.02)	.057# (.03)
Age 30-39	.147# (.08)	.402* (.16)	.204 (.14)
Age 40-49	.192* (.09)	.320* (.15)	-.048 (.15)
Age 50-59	.283** (.10)	.507** (.16)	.162 (.17)
Age 60 plus	.211* (.10)	.486** (.15)	.008 (.23)
Female	-.021 (.06)	.032 (.09)	-.005 (.11)
Patriotism	.058 (.04)	.174* (.12)	.036 (.07)
Ethnic Salience	-.083** (.03)	-.034 (.05)	-.153* (.07)
Constant	2.610***	2.209***	2.888***
R2	.050	.101	.046
Adjusted R Squared	.038	.073	.015
S.E.E.	.904	.787	.926
N	1064	331	319

*Data come from the 2002 and 2000 LACSS, pooled. Cell entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is the same as Table 6, positively coded to reflect support for total immersion. Excluded variable is age 18-29. Ethnic salience is an index of responses to: "How important is being (r's ethnicity) to your sense of identity?" and "How often do you think of yourself as a (r's ethnicity) person?" Patriotism is response to "I am proud to be an American." (4 possible responses: strongly disagree/disagree/agree/strongly agree). ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, #p<.10*

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